

The Winsor House is where their hearts are

Sea captain's home welcomes guests

By Colleen J. Joyce
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To David O'Connell, his job is not just something he does to pay the bills, it is a fascinating adventure every single day.

His home on Washington Street is a world in a simpler time. To O'Connell, The Winsor House is his palace — a palace open to anyone who wants to spend a night or two away from the demands of deadlines and gridlock.

The inn, once owned by Capt. Daniel Winsor, is a bed and breakfast owned by O'Connell and his wife Patricia.

Winsor was a prominent sea captain during a time when merchants and traders lived like kings. Winsor lived in the home until 1860.

The spacious rooms are named according to the color of their walls: Blue, Brown, and Green.

The carriage house suite, with a kitchen, living room, bathroom and bedroom, sits above the central house, complete with a cat sitting on the steps.

The inn also serves as a restaurant, serving a variety of foods from "pub" sandwiches to seafood entrees.

Each room has "its own charm," said O'Connell, unable to decide which one he liked best.

His job as an innkeeper allows O'Connell to have "a wonderful exchange" with the people who pass through the inn.

"I've sat and talked with some guests for hours at a time," he said.

The inn and restaurant is open all year long, but the summer brings the bulk of the business.

"In the summer, between 110-150 people pass through," said O'Connell.

The people bring something extraordinary to an already special place, according to O'Connell.

"It is different than working in a hotel," said O'Connell. "These people expect to have a different relationship with an innkeeper."

When guests come to the inn, according to O'Connell, a special bond is shared with the innkeeper.

Some sit for hours talking with O'Connell like old

friends.

People from around the world have spent the night in The Winsor House, some for months at a time.

"I've learned so much from the people that have stayed here," said O'Connell, "and they have learned from me."

People from countries as far away as Russia have touched O'Connell's life, teaching him about cultures and beliefs other than his own.

In return, O'Connell teaches them about the area and the rich history on the South Shore.

Every morning O'Connell provides his guest with a complete breakfast.

"If someone ate everything we made for them," said O'Connell, "I doubt they'd be able to eat lunch."

The restaurant side of the business is a completely different experience for O'Connell.

"It is two businesses in the same building, the inn and the restaurant," said O'Connell.

People enter each with a different attitude, according to O'Connell.

"When someone is not happy with a product at the restaurant, sometimes they act as if it's the most important thing in the world," said O'Connell.

O'Connell said the his relationship with guests at the bed and breakfast is more personal and relaxed.

Visitors have a more open mind at the inn, he said, and they expect to have a real relationship with the inn keeper.

The restaurant, open seven days a week for dinner, also brings excitement to O'Connell.

"It is a fun menu," he said. "There is so much room for creativity to make a product better."

Chef Erik Stenfors, graduate of the Culinary Institute of America, takes pride in the lack of limitations at the restaurant.

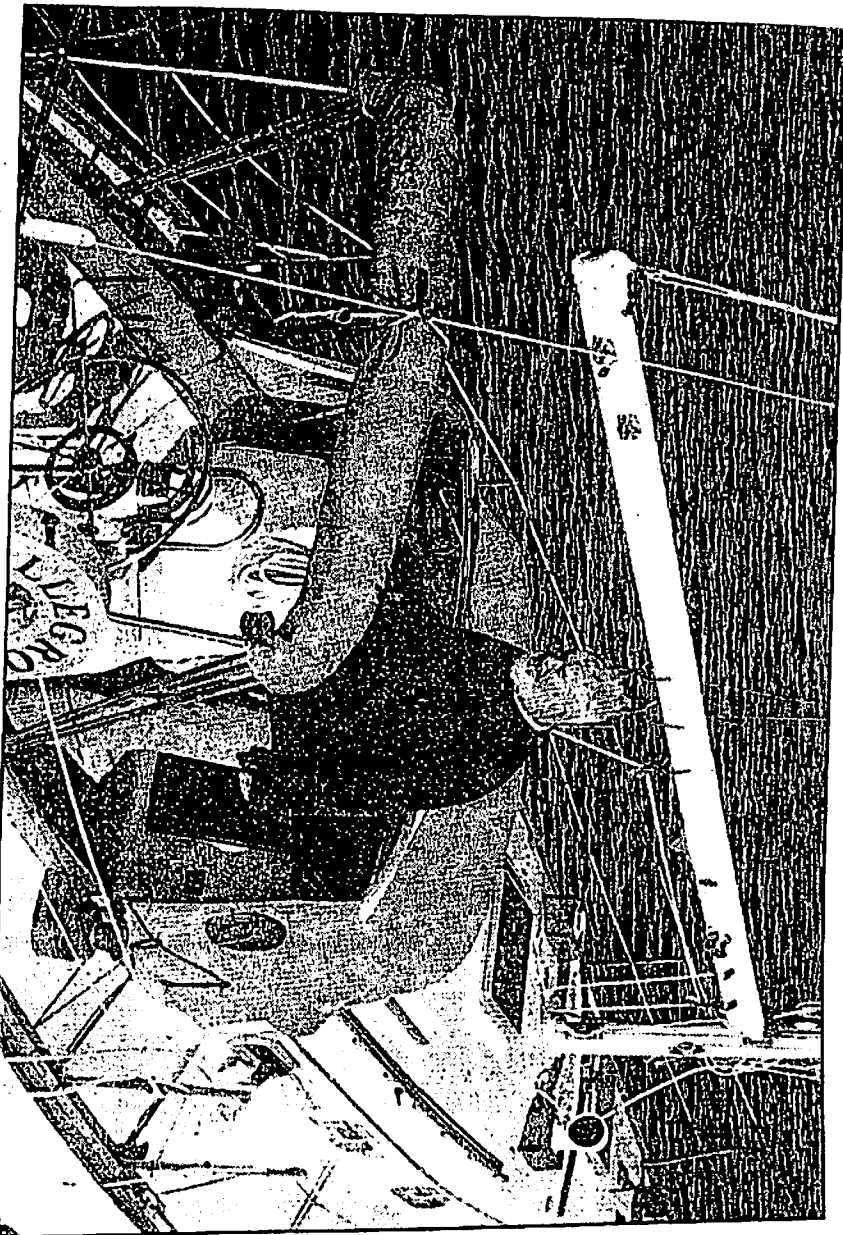
"You can do something fancy," said Stenfors, "or something simple. It keeps us fresh."

Just like the fresh faces that walk through the door, or the fresh welcome O'Connell gives to the familiar customers each season to share the place he calls home.

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Home on the water — David O'Connell aboard his boat *Allegro*.

Staff photo/India Long